



## Coalition To Restore Coastal Louisiana

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program Officially the Largest in the Nation

*12 Restaurants Collect more than 1.5 Million Pounds of Oyster Shell*

**(Baton Rouge, LA –June 9, 2015)** In one of the lowest elevations of land in Louisiana, a mountain is beginning to emerge. It's not marsh that has suddenly been thrust toward the sky, but rather a mountain of oyster shells that have been collected by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana's (CRCL) Oyster Shell Recycling Program. As we mark the one year anniversary of the program, CRCL is proud to announce that its Oyster Shell Recycling Program is officially the **largest in the nation**.

CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program officially began operation in June 2014 by collecting over 10,000 pounds of shell during the 2014 Oyster Festival. Since then CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program has partnered with 12 New Orleans area restaurants to collect more than **1.5 MILLION pounds** or **over 800 tons** of oyster shell.

"Our shell pile is a mountain. Given that Louisiana produces more oysters than any other state, we knew the program would be successful," said [Hilary Collis](#), CRCL's Restoration Program Director. "While we are thrilled by the volume of shell we have collected, we are even more excited to be taking something that was once thrown in landfills and using it to restore our coast."

"The goal of CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program is to return as much shell as possible to our coastal waters," said [Kimberly Davis Reyher](#), CRCL's Executive Director. "This is good for the oyster fishery and it helps protect our coast. With just a handful of dedicated, New Orleans area restaurants we have proven that it can be done--easily and effectively. Just think what can be accomplished when the program is expanded and fully implemented."

"CRCL's mission is to drive bold, science-based action to rebuild our coast. This project certainly was bold, and quite frankly, a bit daunting when we first decided to take it on," said CRCL Board Chair, [Pierre Conner](#). "Nothing like this had ever been done here in Louisiana, but with the help of our partners, and a lot of hard work on the part of the CRCL staff, oyster shell recycling is now a viable alternative to throwing them out with the trash."

"Next we return the shell to the water. We'll be constructing a half mile oyster reef in Biloxi Marsh. The newly constructed reef will create new oyster habitat while providing storm protection to inland marshes and communities," said Collis.

CRCL's current restaurant partners include: [Acme Oyster House](#) (New Orleans and Metairie locations), the [Bourbon House](#), [Redfish Grill](#), [Pêche Seafood](#), [Felix's Restaurant and Oyster Bar](#), [Lüke](#), [Pier 424 Seafood Market](#), [Le Bayou](#), [Drago's](#) (New Orleans and Metairie locations) and [The Royal House](#). CRCL plans to announce more restaurant partners in the New Orleans area this summer, and is also exploring the possibility of expanding the program to Baton Rouge restaurants.

"We've always wanted to do recycling. When all of a sudden, because of CRCL, we came up with a plan that we could recycle, I knew it would be successful," said Dickie Brennan, Owner and Managing Partner, Dickie Brennan's

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Bourbon House. “But what I didn’t know, is right out of the gate it would become come the largest oyster shell recycling program in this country. It’s great to be a part of it.”

“To save our coast is to save our culture! It’s only natural that we partner with CRCL to help replenish and sustain our fisheries for the next generation of chefs,” said Executive Chef at Lüke, Drake Leonards. “The fact that the program is now the largest oyster shell recycling program in the country just goes to show you how important it is to Louisiana and its people.”

Oysters grow best on beds of natural shell. Unfortunately, Louisiana experiences a shell deficit, meaning that most of the oyster shells removed from Louisiana waters are not returned to our oyster beds. The Louisiana oyster industry produces one-third of the nation’s oysters, with a \$317 million impact on the state’s economy.

“Unfortunately, too many times that material ends up out of state or it ends up in landfills,” said Rene LeBreton, Public Information Director, Office of Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. “So this is a great program that allows oyster shell to be recycled and put back in the water so new oysters can grow.”

There were several logistical issues that had to be overcome before the program became a reality. The largest was the sheer weight of oyster shell and the frequency that it would need to be collected from restaurants. CRCL contracted with Phoenix Recycling, who outfits each restaurant with 35 gallon recycling bins (a full bin weighs approximately 200 lbs.), which are collected five days a week. CRCL received additional logistical support from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and a generous donation from Shell.

“When Shell invests in a community, we become part of that community,” said Derek Newberry, General Manager Safety, Shell. “When CRCL approached us with the idea of beginning the first-of-its-kind Oyster Shell Recycling Program, we saw it as an innovative way to restore the coast and help strengthen Louisiana’s oyster fishery, which is a tremendously important economic engine here in Louisiana.”

The collected shells are currently being stored at a Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries site in Buras, LA, where they will cure for six months before being bagged by volunteers and then strategically placed in waters off the coast of Louisiana. The shell will not only help and encourage oyster growth, but over time, the newly formed oyster reefs will also help build new coastal marsh and mitigate storm surge.

#### **Quick Facts:**

- Launched in June 2014, CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program recycles used shell from participating New Orleans-based restaurants and uses that shell to restore oyster reefs and shoreline habitat across Coastal Louisiana.
- CRCL’s current restaurant partners include: [Acme Oyster House](#) (New Orleans and Metairie locations), the [Bourbon House](#), [Redfish Grill](#), [Pêche Seafood](#), [Felix’s Restaurant and Oyster Bar](#), [Lüke](#), [Pier 424 Seafood Market](#), [Le Bayou](#), [Drago’s](#) (New Orleans and Metairie locations) and [The Royal House](#).
- As of June 2015, the program has collected over **800 tons** of shell.
- The oyster shell is collected by local recycling company, Phoenix Recycling five days a week and stored in Buras, LA.
- Sponsored by \$1 million donation from Shell.
- One oyster can filter 50 gallons of water per day.

- Oyster reefs act as natural breakwaters that knock down waves and protect inland marshes and communities from storm surge.
- Oyster reefs are ideal fish habitat; one fourth of annual marine fishing occurs over oyster beds.
- Louisiana experiences a shell deficit – 60% of shell removed from the coast is not returned to help promote continued oyster reef growth.
- CRCL is currently looking to expand its Oyster Shell Recycling Program. Interested restaurants in New Orleans and Baton Rouge should contact Hilary Collis, Restoration Program Director at [hilaryc@crcl.org](mailto:hilaryc@crcl.org).

**Attachments:**

Attached you find a five minute that was shot and produced by CRCL. It features quotes from Hilary Collis, CRCL’s Restoration Director; Rene LeBreton, PIO LA. Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; Derek Newberry, General Manager of Safety, Shell and representatives from five of the 12 participating restaurants. Also included is one minute version of the longer piece and individual sound bytes from Collis, Tommy Cvitanovich with Acme Oyster House, Ryan Prewitt of Peche Seafood, Derek Newberry and Dickie Brennan from the Bourbon House.

- Five Minute Oyster Shell Recycling Video- <https://youtu.be/RouF-l8Jtfw>
- One Minute Version Oyster Shell Recycling <https://youtu.be/S8WGYvcTXEE>
- Hilary Collis <https://youtu.be/sh1vcXVmMzo> Collis discusses how the project was implemented, the location of the stored shell, expansion plans for the program
- Tommy Cvitanovich—Acme Oyster Bar <https://youtu.be/jbsLDTGdubQ>
- Ryan Prewitt—Peche Seafood <https://youtu.be/PaLqzLw4MmM>
- Derek Newberry [https://youtu.be/F\\_XbU9pSzKA](https://youtu.be/F_XbU9pSzKA)
- Dickie Brennan <https://youtu.be/8l2pdU9CqSw>

CRCL gives written permission for reporters and media outlets to use this video as they see fit. It can also be edited as long as the substance and meaning of the altered pieces remains intact.



Hilary Collis is dwarfed by the mountain of oyster shells being stored in Buras, LA. The Shells are part of CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program, which is now the largest program of its kind in the country.



A plate of freshly shucked Louisiana Oysters. Recycling oyster shell is a delicious way to help restore our coast.

**About CRCL:**

Founded in 1988, The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana is the longest-standing statewide non-profit organization driving bold, science-based action to rebuild Coastal Louisiana through outreach, restoration and advocacy. With the support of members and volunteers, CRCL advocates strong coastal policies and implements restoration projects across Coastal Louisiana.

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